

Ep #196: Creature Mode: How to Nourish Your Creative Process



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With Your Host

Leah Badertscher

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This week's episode continues the conversation we started last week, the introduction to creature mode. In that episode, I introduced you to the concept of creature mode, the practice of it.

In essence, creature mode addresses this phenomenon in the modern world where we are too often taught that the creative process is something that just happens in our heads and we deny that the rest of us is involved.

I know that the creative process is meant to engage your creature self. And you will see how those words create creativity, creature, all share a root. Oftentimes, we begrudgingly use our creature self or are dismissive of it or just take it for granted, rather than access the power of the creature self.

So, whether you are stuck or you feel that your work lacks a certain vitality or richness or depth or imagination, or whether you are already feeling very strong in your creative work, in your creative process, but want to access something that you know is within you or available to you, creature mode can be a portal and a practice to that.

And I'm going to continue also the conversation I started last week about my own experience and practice of creature mode, and in particular some present-time, real-time, for example, what I did last week and what I didn't do and my evaluation of that and my insights into that.

So, I hope you find this helpful in continuing to navigate your own creative force of nature self, to continue to support you in unleashing and nurturing your own creative genius and becoming the artist, the person that you're meant to be.

You are listening to *The Art School Podcast*, a show for artists and creatives who want to become the next greatest version of themselves.

Ep #196: Creature Mode: How to Nourish Your Creative Process

Learn how to cultivate an extraordinary way of being and take the mystery out of making money, and the struggle out of making art. Here is your host, master certified life coach, artist, and former lawyer, Leah Badertscher.

Hello, everyone, and welcome to another episode of *The Art School Podcast*. So, I finished reading this summer – I’m probably late to the game – Patti Smith’s memoir *Just Kids*. And I actually realized once I finished it that I think the last six or seven memoirs that I’ve read – and I love memoirs from artists and creatives – and the last six or seven have all been written by singer-songwriters, musicians.

And I know Patti Smith is also a painter and a poet, but that was one of those a-has where I’m like, well that’s really interesting.

Anyway, with Patti Smith’s book, I loved this book. And one part in particular is relevant to today’s episode. She had this section where she was describing being in her studio, sitting on the floor, and having all of these papers around her because she had drawings and poems.

And then, what she wrote next really caught my attention. She wrote, “I don’t know what I’m doing, but I can’t stop doing it. I’m like a blind sculptor hacking away.” And then, she goes on to talk about how she felt, intuited, sensed that she needed something more physical to bring all of this work together. She needed something more physical.

And that resonated deeply with me as well because that is a feeling I have had, both of those, I guess, categories, feeling like I don’t know what I’m doing but I can’t stop doing it, feeling like I’m a blind sculptor hacking away, and then feeling that the answer – I feel like these two statements are questions.

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“I don’t know what I’m doing but I can’t stop doing it. I’m like a blind sculptor hacking away.” I feel like those are questions that beg the answer that came next where she intuited, “I need something more physical.” And that has been my experience at various times too. Which is where the creature self comes in, which is where creature mode comes in.

And that has meant various things for me at different points in my life. And in no way by me sharing my examples do I mean that these are – the examples that I share – are your pathway forward.

What I want to illustrate though in sharing these stories is that you can trust your instincts. And if it has never occurred to you to trust an instinct that is telling you to engage more of the creature self, to be more physical, then maybe you just need to hear that.

I definitely affirmed it for me, reaffirmed it, reading it from someone like Patti Smith, that there is this instinct in us that does drive us to want to gather all of these ways that we’ve been hacking together and that it is okay to feel – I mean, if Patti Smith can have felt like she didn’t know what she was doing but she couldn’t stop doing it, if she felt like a blind sculptor yet she then sculpted, or participated in the sculpting of a creative life that has been so prolific and diverse, that’s also available to you and I.

And I felt like that part of her story was an example of someone using and accessing the creature self, the physical self. And so, in her story, when she talked about sensing that she needed something more physical, what that ended up looking like for her was, “I need to do a reading,” and her companion Robert had suggested that too, “You need to organize a reading. People need to hear your work, see your work, hear you read your work.”

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So, her first reading was at St. Mark's Church, which was famous then, still is famous for poetry readings. And she did something different. She wanted to leave her mark at St. Mark's Church, so she invited a musician, a guitarist to come in and play the electric guitar while she read her work.

So, this obviously is pointing towards foreshadowing the future of also her career as a rockstar, and it blew people's mind to have a guitar played at St. Mark's Church and not everybody was a fan. She got a lot of boos. But she also know she was onto something.

And so, this performance part, for her, was the something physical. But backing up even before that, knowing that you are going to perform somewhere, knowing that you are going to do a reading required then assembling those scattered papers all over the floor and pulling them together to start to create a body, so that things that were fragmented could come together as a body, as a body of work, and knowing that there was going to be this physical performance helped focus all of that somewhat dispersed, maybe it seemed incoherent creative energy and allowed the coherence that was already existing, allowed the pattern that was already trying to be expressed through her and as said, "I don't know what I'm doing but I can't stop doing it."

That points to something that wants to happen through you and then that acknowledgment and honoring of something more physical was needed, that helped pull it all together.

And I wanted to point out that that something more physical part of that looks to the anticipation of sharing it with the world. Because this work of being an artist, whether that's how you identify yourself professionally or whether you just know in your heart of hearts that you're creative as all humans are, this is not just a naval-gazing inner work scenario.

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It's collaborative. It's collaborative with the divine, it's collaborative with your anticipation if you're a storyteller of any kind, of the audience, if you're a painter, you're a storyteller.

And it's this communal act of a musician, a painter, a poet, we're also anticipating – or if you're a jazz musician – live-time responding to the audience. It's not just an island selfish work.

If you think of great works of art too like Ode to Joy, yes perhaps the initial inspiration was downloaded from the universe, and yet, what would that have been without imagining the effect it would have on people, has had on people for centuries now?

So, that something more physical, also to me implies that physical world with other people and presenting our work and gathering it up and moving into that space then where you are vulnerable, you are courageous and you're taking a risk in sharing your work and then also receiving feedback.

And like I said last week, as we're creating our work in the world, it's also creating us. And having seen what resonates with others is very different though than seeking approval or people pleasing or needing validation or needing other people to like it or approve of it because they won't.

Again, in the Patti Smith scenario, many people hated and were horrified, felt it sacrilegious almost that they sort of defiled the sacred poetry space of St. Mark's Church by bringing in an electric guitar.

So, it's not always and often about pleasing. But there is something greater going on. It's like when you are in community with other people and sharing your work, a pathway, a portal opens to this third conversation, third energy

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happening that's bigger than everyone and it's trying to tap into the resonance of that.

So, I wanted to include this Patti Smith story to illustrate another aspect, another nuance of the creature mode. Because last week, I think I referenced focus more and talking about the being in your own body, the physical aspect, which for me is also fundamental, critical, inextricable from the creative process.

And I wanted to then broaden the conversation this week to also point to this other aspect, which is our outside world, which is audience. And also, something else that Patti Smith's story illustrates that's also an aspect of this creature mode are other artists, the artistic lineage, this spiritual sometimes artistic lineage of which you are a part and that creative inspiration sometimes, yes, is just downloaded.

And so many artists though too use an already existing body of creative work that has a physical presence in the world as a sort of training wheels for their own creativity to map onto first and to be able to flow out into the world.

So, for instance, Patti Smith had written this highly-charged poem called Oath. She was a Jehovah's Witness, so it was kind of a big middle finger to her experience of religion. And she started reciting that in top of the lyrics from Van Morrison's Gloria.

And so, a song though that eventually became totally hers was first mapped onto the music of someone else's song. And this happens all of the time. I mean, just another musical reference, the Beatles. Like, the Beatles were a major collage artist.

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Like, in the beginning, they were talking from all different genres. And that was what kind of made them unique because musicians are accustomed to borrowing, stealing from one lineage or maybe a couple, but they were very diverse, nondiscriminatory in their borrowing and put it all together in this mish mash.

And then, it eventually evolved though from a collage of others and something that their own essence flowed into and changed completely, and definitely bears the imprint and the initial DNA of a lot of those other genres of music, but became something totally new.

And I wanted to bring in that aspect of creature mode too because I know I had been reluctant in the past to study too much of someone else's work, whether it was writing or poetry, painting, and then realizing though that that is actually a way forward, that actually gives your creativity an opportunity to study and then morph and grow into what it wants to be

Here too, I hear clients shut down their instincts around they're really drawn to a particular lineage of art, particular traditions, and then like, "Oh, but I don't want to copy."

And yet, if you are accessing your creature self, you know that throughout nature, this is how creatures learn. Tiger cubs learn to hunt by watching their mother in the wild. And if you had grown up perhaps the child of artistic, creative parents, you absorbed a lot of their process by imitation.

Or when I went to law school, I had several classmates whose parents were judges or lawyers, and they had already absorbed, so much already came easily to them because it was part of the language of their family of origin, part of the way they moved in the world.

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And that doesn't mean they were exact replicas of their parents, but it gives you the sort of scaffolding from then which to build your own creative body of work and later that scaffolding can be taken down because the building stands on its own.

So the reason I again present this is to not reject the scaffolding. If part of your instinct is telling you you're drawn to something, learn why you're drawn to it, study it. Integrate it.

I, for years, had this practice I started in law school because it felt so healing to me, where I'd get up early in the morning and I would write out a novel that I loved. And at one point, I had written out one of Marilyn Robinson's novels, and then I typed it out again.

I wanted to get her way of writing, the gentle cadence and something about the rhythm, something about the energy of it inside of me. And later, when I started writing poetry and studying poetry, I would do the same. And that was also easier because I had little babies at the time.

I would memorize by heart with my entire being poems first by writing them out longhand over and over again on like stacks of yellow legal pads, to internalize the cadence, so it got to the point I would memorize them and I wouldn't have to think with my brain, my rational brain about what would come next. But I would know with my whole body which next word was energetically inevitable.

So, I promised in last week's episode that I would share some personal current updates of my own, again, current present-day practice with this. I believe I also shared recently that I needed to completely clean out my studio. I felt like I was just rearranging parts in there and just had a deep need and a desire to get everything out.

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And I've done this before too and also with the encouragement of my dear friend and colleague Amanda Gibby Peters, who is the founder of Simple Shui and is just so brilliant, brilliant when it comes to all things energy and your environment, all things feng shui.

And in our last house, I was telling her about – I had a similar experience at once point where I needed to clear everything out and I wanted to paint the whole room white. And she told me about this practice where you leave the room empty for 27 days and you don't put anything back until you have this deep knowing and desire of what goes back in.

So, I was able to do that at the time. Where I am now, I know what wants to go back in now that everything is out and I'm not doing the waiting 27 days. But for me, this is just another illustration of honoring and trusting your instincts around your creative process.

Because yes, you could question yourself, "Oh, I'm just procrastinating." And I definitely had thoughts like that. But there is also, I have a deeper sense, a deeper trust of something else going on, that there is also this energetic and creature component to creativity and they know something. Your creature self knows something.

And the more you trust it, then the more reasons you have to trust it, and the more that deepens. And my creature self needed a big clean out.

And here's what I've already discovered. I've found so much that I had forgotten that I had created that is in line with what I thought were more recent foals I set. For instance, in the last year, I thought this was a new goal. I thought I recently decided, "Hey, I think I should also put together a book of children's poems."

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Because after my last book, what has been a surprise – the last book was *Wild Blue Yonder* – what has been a surprise has been hearing from some of you with children, whose children like certain poems in that book. And not all of it is for children, but there are certain ones that you've said, "Oh my kids like that."

And then, my own kids like certain poems in my book. And then, my nieces and nephews, my mom was telling me when they're back at my parents' house, they'll ask to read from Aunt Yaya's book – that's me, Aunt Yaya – at night. And again, not every poem is for a child, but there are certain poems.

And so, I thought, "Oh, well I should then just write a book that's all for children, all children's poems because I myself love a great anthology of children's poems.

And then, as I was cleaning my office and I was thinking, "Okay, well I'll put that on the list of things to do for the year." And then though, as I was cleaning my office and deep cleaning, Marie Kondoin, touching everything, I found several poems that, as I looked through them, I had forgotten about them.

And I was like, this would work. This is entirely appropriate. This would be perfect for a children's anthology. And so, part of the book is already written. And that theme continued across the board.

One of the ways I thought I'd been craving something more physical in my own creative work is to have a show, an exhibit, an installation for art.

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And I thought, “Well I’ll have to think about what that will be and play with creating a series and putting it together.” But what else emerged from cleaning out my studio was a recognition that that’s already in process.

And when I saw a few of these paintings that just haphazardly laid out together, it gave me a much bigger idea for what I want that installation to look like. And to me, it was already formed. It was just needing me to recognize it.

And I recognized it once I had these fragments of creativity laid out together, once I had space to see them. And that was something else I realized cleaning out my studio was my creature self knew, you need clear space so that you can envision and physically have a space to work with putting together larger coherent projects, including writing projects, but also including these painting projects.

And so, in addition to that, other things that were amazing for my creature self in the last week, I painted every day at least for three or four hours a day. And there’s also a different kind of energy coming through the work.

I finished three works on paper, one of which I like. The other two, I’m like, I don’t know. I think it remains to be seen. But something is developing. And I worked on this other series, my series that is the 3D sculptural series with wings that stands for physical expression of the invisible forces that are always supporting us, particular invisible forces of love and protection and the benevolent forces that guide our lives, and also is meant to be a reminder of your ability to be that kind of energy incarnate, to embody love and that you too are the physical embodiment of these invisible forces in your creative acts and your acts of love, whatever it is that you’re creating in the world.

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And so, I wanted to create art that is imbued with this kind of energy, so that people can have it in their homes and be reminded of the love that they are and of the love that is surrounding them, that that kind of energy can bless and grace their space and also it is a manifestation of my knowing that our creature self needs these physical reminders.

There's something different that happens when we feel seen from the outside in. And that's something that I want my art to communicate, that when you see it, you're reminded of the worlds within worlds within yourself, that you are reminded of the many aspects of divinity and humanity in your human experience, as a soul in this creature-self body.

I also wanted to note a few other things that really were clear to me this last week that I think will be helpful for you. And that is continuing to care for your central nervous system. And particularly if you are in a period of the year and in your life – as I know many of you are. Not everyone – where it's summertime and your children are home for the summer and you are trying to do all the things and you're having guests or you're travelling, all the beautiful things in life.

Because what I found this last week, I'd found I had overcommitted, overextended myself. I found myself suddenly realizing I'd crossed a line and not knowing I'd crossed a line until it was too late and I just felt terrible.

And so, that was a great reminder to me. And I also wanted to share with you, as a reminder, that this isn't a process about perfection and it's an ongoing process about learning. And all of my yesses were things I was happy to say yes to but I was not looking down the road and actually being realistic about my energy and expectations.

Also, just really physically diving into both cleaning out my space and also physically diving into more paintings helped a part of me to more

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realistically and also physically assess what the energetic needs and expectations are for these creations.

Which is a very different process than when you're just in your head and you can fantasize about doing all of the things. I am all for yes, a rich and full life. And I also want myself and I also want for you to have that delicious experience of completion.

So, this is a little bit of a sidenote and bonus, but also very relevant to this topic of creature mode and having a healthy creature mode and a creative process that feels so deeply nourishing to you that you, from that place of nourishment, more naturally create the results that you want to experience in life and that you also get to experience yourself and the process in a way that feels good to you, that feels meaningful to you, that feels like, "This is what I'm meant to do."

And it's a conversation that came up in the mastermind where we were talking about how the scroll through social media, you can get involved in a scroll and it feels terrible, but you're looking for something and you never seem to find it. And you keep scrolling, thinking you're going to find what you want to find, grab your phone and find something.

You don't know what it is, but you're looking for something that will feed that. And you don't. You just instead feel worse than when you started and still somehow creatively hungry.

And so, I've talked about this before, about knowing your own creature-self needs between consuming, which could be studying, which could be copying, imitating, learning, looking for inspiration, filling the well of your psyche with inspiration. All valid. And then also, using your body as a barometer for when enough is enough and when that's not really what

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you're doing anymore when you're scrolling or searching or researching, air quotes, studying.

And instead, something as simple as a daily art journal practice, five minutes of scribbling, five minutes of doodling, five minutes of jotting down your own ideas, how deeply good that feels.

And that was again an experience that was echoed through the group again and again, that the brain wants to say, "That's not going to be enough. You can't just sit down for five to 10 minutes and have it be enough." But it really is.

And the felt experience of it, you feel satiated. You feel creatively nourished. And I wanted to weave that into the conversation as a very pragmatic and seemingly small but not insignificant feature of paying attention to your creature self and its needs and giving it sustenance and not just junk food.

So, this brings me to the part of the podcast where I want you to do more than just listen. I want you to lean in and really work with me, coach with me. Don't just listen to this information. Make it physical in your life. Take it into your creature self and make it transformational.

So, my question for you this week is, where could your creature self benefit from more physicality? Where can you be more physical with your work and trust anything that comes up for you?

It could be working out in your garden more, as it has been for me, is what your creature self needs to nourish your creative process. It could be another movement practice, writing, swimming, dancing.

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Oh my gosh, so much to say about dance. I had a conversation with a friend last night where she just said - and she's not one to exaggerate about things like this. She's like, "Dance has changed my life." I agree. So, it could be dance.

It could also be some of the examples that I've used here. Maybe you've been working on something for a while and now what you need is to share it into the world. You need a show. You need a completed book, putting together your own anthology of poems. You need to gather your work up together and somehow let it move and be, ship it off into the world.

Trust whatever comes up for you. I would love to hear about it. I would love to see examples of what being more physical and engaging, supporting your creature self and also allying with it to support you, what that looks like for you.

You can find me on Instagram, @leahcb1. I'd love to have you join us in the Art School Facebook Group. It's free to join, just be sure to answer the intro questions so that we know why you're there. And also, be sure to sign up for my emails. I'm going to be offering so much goodness coming up here, free or nearly free, highly discounted, as well as in-person workshops and retreats because that also is part of my answer to what my creature self is craving, more in-person interaction, more in-depth physical presence with people, and beautiful, amazing spaces where I can really nourish the entire human, including the creature self that craves and responds to beauty.

Your muse craves and responds and is evoked by beauty and radical nurturing. And also, from that space, enjoys a challenge, from that space is willing to be challenged and strengthened and it's an incredible recipe for eliciting your highest potential.

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In these spaces where you are deeply nourished, a switch is flipped. And instead of looking at a creative project as this formidable daunting thing, your soul really sees it and seizes upon it as a chance for expression, for evolution, and for growth.

So, I'm wanting to create as many experiences, virtual and in person, as possible, to work with this radical nurturing and to help you unleash your creative genius and see the physical manifestation of that in the world, see it manifested as book after book after book, painting after painting after painting and a creative practice that feels every day deeply nurturing and nourishing to all of you, body, soul, spirit, creature self.

Thank you for listening for another episode of *The Art School Podcast*. If you have enjoyed this podcast, if this episode has helped you reignite, reawaken your creative dreams and helped you move the needle in your life, I would love it if you could help me spread the word about this movement, about this creative revolution, by sharing the podcast, by subscribing, by going to iTunes and leaving a review.

And, as I mentioned last week, something my creature self is craving is getting to know more of you, like person by person, individual by individual. And so, last week, I talked about 10 at a time. Really, if 10 people at a time, one at a time share this episode with one other person, to me, that's something that I can get – like, my soul feels like grit under its feet with.

Like, yes, this matters, this is helping someone, this is moving someone's life forward. I know that creativity is life-changing because creativity carries with it the essence of who you are. And people who feel their own ability have a confidence in their ability to self-actualize, to move their visions and their desires into the world, into physical form, those are healthy, happy people that are also highly created, and highly creative, that's what I meant to say.

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Those are the change agents. Those are the people who are called to be the change they wish to see in the world and go out and create it. And those are the people that I love to support, the people who feel like there is something in them that is dying to be expressed, that is dying to be alive and real in the world.

So, if 10 of you at a time, a tribe of 10 at a time can share this with one other person, that would be amazing and I would love to know who you are and to connect with you and thank you.

So, to close today, I wanted to share some announcements about upcoming opportunities for you to continue to have your creative genius supported and to continue to unleash your own prolific AF self.

So, I mentioned in last week's episode, on August 18th, I will be doing a live workshop, a Q&A format. I'll be interviewed by the cofounder of RevelEleven, which is an incredible organization, helping you to bring your creativity and your dreams for your life to life through workshops, through retreats. And the title of this is Finding Your Creative Compass.

It's a warmup for an in-person live event I'll be doing with them in Seattle in October. And also, in October, after that live event, we will be hosting a four-day retreat just outside of Seattle at RevelEleven's beautiful retreat center.

So, I would love to see so many Art Schoolers and the audience for both the August 18th workshop, which is free to register. And also, live in October, those signups will be happening soon, on August 23rd, I'm hosting, through the Art School, a live workshop, so be sure you're on my newsletter list to receive my emails, to learn more about that.

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And after that, later that week, I will be announcing, through my newsletter, openings for limited free coaching, one on one, and also limited highly discounted one-to-one sessions with me.

So, those are just a few examples of the goodness we have coming your way through the Art School. And be sure to stay in touch and informed on my newsletter for more because there is going to be so much more.

So, before I close today, I want to leave you with this. What is one way that you can take your creative work and be more physical with it this week? It could be something very small.

Don't just make a plan to do something in the future, but actually dig your hands into something today, this week, possibly every day. You will be astounded at the energy that shifts.

Oh my gosh, I forgot to mention there was some huge things, huge energy-shifting things that happened for me this week, but I referenced it somewhat on Instagram and I'll be talking about it, I'm sure, more soon. But trust this.

Get the creature self involved. How can you support it? How can it support you? What is it telling you? And then do something about it. It is the point to do something about it and not just be in your head. Don't think; do. And have a beautiful week, everyone. I'll look forward to talking with you next time.